

## Miller, Kristina

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**From:** Miller, Kristina  
**Sent:** Friday, March 29, 2019 7:37 PM  
**To:** R5 ER Notification List  
**Cc:** Haag, Daniel; Maguire, Andrew; Emmanouil, Stavros; Zintak, Leonard; Kondreck, Robert; Mendoza, Ramon; Maritote, John; Mendez, Thomas  
**Subject:** Region 5 ER Notification #5: Camras School Mercury Spill, Chicago, Illinois  
**Attachments:** Photo1.jpg; Photo2.jpg

### **Region 5 ER Notification #5: Camras School Mercury Spill, Chicago, Illinois (NRC Report #1241158)**

**Report as of:** 1900 hrs CST, March 29, 2019

**Overview:** Students were discovered handling mercury by Chicago Public School District (CPS) staff at Camras Elementary School located at 3000 N. Mango St in Chicago, Illinois on March 26, 2019. A broken barometer was the source of the unknown amount of mercury. CPS staff discovered the students handling the mercury and contacted the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Chicago Fire Department (CFD) for assistance in evaluating the threat. CPS, CDPH, and CFD determined the students involved in the handling of the mercury, assessed where the mercury could be tracked, and performed targeted screening prior to students leaving for the day. Elevated mercury levels were discovered in various parts of the building during the initial assessment.

The school is still currently closed and clean-up activities are being conducted by CPS contractors. CPS contractors are concentrating cleanup activities on the area of the barometer break and adjacent areas. Passive heating of the school using the schools HVAC equipment is ongoing.

**State, Local, and other Federal Agency Action:** CDPH and CFD initially responded to the mercury spill. Illinois EPA was informed of the mercury spill. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) was contacted for technical assistance and has consulted with CDPH on clearance levels for the school classrooms as well as the students' personal belongings.

**EPA Actions:** Currently three EPA OSCs and six EPA START contractors continue to assist CDPH and CPS in determining the extent of the mercury contamination. Today, EPA screened lockers, prioritizing those of the students that handled the mercury. Screening of the playground continued, with no elevated readings detected to date. CDPH and START entered the hot zone(s) to conduct a more thorough assessment of the current status of the highly impacted areas. Cleanup of those areas is still underway and no clearance sampling has been conducted. EPA continued to screen homes of students that showed elevated readings in their screened personal items. EPA is also continuing to heat and vent personal items.

CPS hosted a parent meeting after school on March 29, 2019. The meeting provided an update for parents on the sequence of events on the day of the spill, response actions taken to date, and provided health information. The panel included CPS, EPA, CDPH, and the Chicago Fire Department. Parents were given the opportunity to ask questions during the meeting as well as one on one with officials after. ATSDR also attended the meeting but did not sit on the panel. Approximately 70 people attended the meeting. EPA was available to conduct screening of any personal items from students using a Lumex outside of the building. Following the screenings, EPA identified a personal item that warrants further follow up with a home visit.

**Media Interest:**

No press were on site for the meeting, however EPA did a phone interview.

**Previous coverage:**

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/mercury-spill-school-camras-elementary-chicago-public-schools/> (incorrectly states thermometer)

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-mercury-spill-elementary-school-20190327-story.html>

**EPA Region 5 OSC contacts:**

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Thank you,

Kristina Miller

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